

8 piracy killers that weren't

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Throughout the sadly neutered lifespan of the Amiga, a number of novel strategies aimed at tackling the critical piracy issue were touted by the software publishers. Often amidst a fanfare of optimism would be a naive declaration that *this* time the latest gizmo, zany scheme or encryption code would surely bring about the downfall of the profit-deflating cracker.

Nonetheless, I can't think of many examples that caused the crackers to lose more than a few winks of sleep. They swiftly deciphered the state-of-the-art algorithms employed, unravelled them and uploaded the ransacked games to the bulletin boards as per usual.



A Thief Writes

Dear Dude,

I am writing to express my growing concern about the state of software piracy in this country. As we all know there is a lot of pirated software around and it is much easier to pay the price of a disk than to pay over £30 for a manual and a nice shiny box.

I get about £5 a week and have a software collection of around £5000 - am I Paul Daniels?

No, I'm a pirate and although I think it is unfair on the programmers, I am not ashamed to copy programs.

Most people will tell you that you cannot have your cake and eat it too. But at the moment, with copying programs available, piracy and hacking will go on until the programmers outwit the hackers.

Till then, I, and 90% of Amiga users, will go on the way we always have.

The programmers have already proven that not all programs are easy to copy. For instance, on a Kickstart 1.3, a copy of Falcon will result in your plane blowing up before you get off the ground, owing to the protection on the first disk. After discovering this I went out and bought an original copy of Falcon and have never regretted it since - nice one Spectrum Holobyte.

Anonymous

The once-proud town of Antigua is at your mercy as the remainder of the garrison flees. Your crew begins to round up gold and valuables.



Dear Dope,

Of course piracy will go on while numbskulls like you think the way you do. You clearly have no concept of right and wrong - if you were really concerned about software piracy you would not do it.

As for claiming that 90% of Amiga users are pirates, that's drivel. If everyone took your attitude, a software industry would not exist.

Trying to find safety in numbers does not justify your actions. If you want good software then be prepared to pay for it - programmers, artists, musicians and designers do not work for nothing.

Piracy on a plate (Amiga Format issue 9, April 1990)

It was a tumultuous era dogged by apocalyptic 'don't copy that floppy' scaremongering, even for those who played by the rules, opting to buy their software from a legitimate source, simply because it was the right thing to do.



Fastism?

"Have we really gone back to the days of Hitler Youth when children reported their own parents and family for rewards. I have read AF since day one, but I will have to seriously reconsider buying any future issues."

An AF Reader Concerned for Human Rights

Your men flee in panic as the tide of battle turns against them. You bravely fight on and are wounded. You are imprisoned in Antigua. Months pass as you await your fate...



January 1661

"FAST adverts are run for free in an attempt to combat piracy - we get no revenue from them. I think your reaction to the ads is overly dramatic because they are clearly targeted at a particular criminal activity and one

which will require proof of guilt. We are not talking about any form of racial, sexual or religious persecution."

Amiga Format issue 14 (September 1990)



Below I detail a small selection of the publisher's most noteworthy brainwaves in no particular order, what they aimed to achieve, and why they failed dismally.

1. Budget games

Cheapest Amiga games ever?

Though Amiga budget games are getting cheaper and cheaper, none yet have hit quite as low a mark as the new Pocket Power Collection from Prism. Priced at just £2.99 each, for the first time the range will bring playable games at PD or 8-bit prices.

Moreover, the blister packs containing the games will become a familiar sight in other places than the usual software outlets: you'll be able to pick up a title with your spare change at the newsagent or the garage.

Sixteen Amiga titles will be available, ranging from the surprisingly dynamic shoot-em-up Plutos to the famous football strategy title Football Director. Another 16 titles are due to be announced soon and are expected

to include some big names of the past. Look for more details and perhaps reviewettes in SPoutro next month.

Prism Leisure, Unit 1 Baird Rd, Enfield, EN1 1SJ.

They'll be paying you to take them off their hands next! Amiga Format issue 24, July 1991.



More of an end-user preoccupation this one. Many people who pirated software would argue they did it simply because the retail price was so exorbitant they couldn't afford to pay it. They rationalised that if the games were marked up at a more reasonable rate they'd happily start buying legitimate software and turn over a new leaf.

You can (kind of) evaluate the effectiveness of this concept by looking at the take-up of budget-priced releases. Now these weren't cut-price out of the goodness of the publisher's hearts; they tended to be older games that had enjoyed their five minutes of fame and were considered a bit long in the

tooth, looking decidedly shabby on the shelf next to hot off the press titles.

It's impossible to discern how many people who would typically pirate games, instead chose to buy genuine budget titles based on the price policy alone. Wouldn't they already own these games given that they are *re-releases*?

What we *do* know is that the cracking groups would go to work on anything that was copyright protected regardless of the price point. If a group will crack a £2.99 Prism Leisure release (and they did), anything is fair game!

They generally weren't in it to save money, make a political statement or play Robin Hood, it was all about the thrill of the race and the glory of being top dog - the first to strip out a game's protection and distribute it to the adjudicators.

It would be interesting to know how many people bought cracked Prism games for £1 each at a car boot sale, under the counter in a shady software shop, or through mail order to save the extra couple of pounds.



Pirate Politics

Since I bought my Amiga four years ago, I have been using nothing but pirated software, apart from the occasional boxed package. I know this is stealing, so I have decided to send the relevant amount of cash to the programmers each time I buy a pirated program. For example, if I bought a pirated game that's worth £25.99 I would send £5.25 to the programmers. I worked this out from the article on the price of games in AF37.

Because I am not buying from retailers or distributors, I only have to pay the £9.95 to the publisher. Since I am not using any of the publisher's disks, boxes, manuals, marketing or repro, I only owe the publisher £5.25. Is there something wrong with this idea?

I don't think that I will ever break the habit of buying pirate software as long as games are so expensive. Street Fighter II, for example, was NOT worth the price, and I

would never pay that much for such a sad attempt to get money from buyers by putting the Street Fighter logo on a box containing cheaply programmed software that isn't worth the disk it's on.

If the price of games was less, I would buy original software. A lot of my friends have also agreed to send money to the programmers each time they get a pirate game.

A Reforming Pirate, Somewhere

Piracy is still stealing, no matter whether you send money to the programmers or not. I agree that sometimes games are not worth the money you pay for them, that is why we review them. But copying games is quite simply illegal. I appreciate that you have gone to the effort of sending some money to the programmers, but that doesn't make it all right.

An Amiga Format reader takes matters into his own hands in issue 71 (May 1995)



No reliable statistics exist detailing the number of Amiga games pirated over the years, yet a useful parallel for comparison is the *modern* games industry. This is far easier to monitor now that so many games function through tapping into a central server for authentication purposes.

Paul Johnson, programmer and Managing Director of Rubicon Development makes some pertinent observations in the comments section of an article entitled, 'It's better to embrace piracy'. To his dismay he notes that the ratio of installed counterfeit to genuine copies of his latest game is 20:1 despite the award-winning title being made available for a pittance of \$3.

Very few *new* games entered the Amiga market at a budget price, the publishers would argue because the costs of production are so high it wouldn't be feasible. Had they done so we could compare the sales figures against those of the major full-priced releases. My guess is they would have

revealed just as many losses to piracy. Would a pirate really pass up the opportunity to pay a pound for a budget title that would otherwise cost a tenner in Boots? (incidentally, one of the most fertile software retailers back in the '80s and '90s, believe it or not)



A Pirate Rants

Once again, you're another mag that preaches on and on about how naughty we pirates are. 'Tut, tut, slap their wrist, what naughty people' - you magazines really make me sick. The reason I pirate games is simply because I can. I'm not going to pay thirty quid for, say, Populous II if all I have to do is get a mate to run me off a copy - I've got better things to do with my money. I don't even agree with the so-called hackers who say 'we only do it because games are so dear, if they were cheaper I'd buy more.'

Rubbish, my collection has nearly every game available on the Amiga in it - budget releases included. After all, even if I save seven or eight quid, it's still more for me. I had Robocop III before it was in the shops, I had Rainbow Islands before Ocean got it from Microprose. You name it, I've got it.

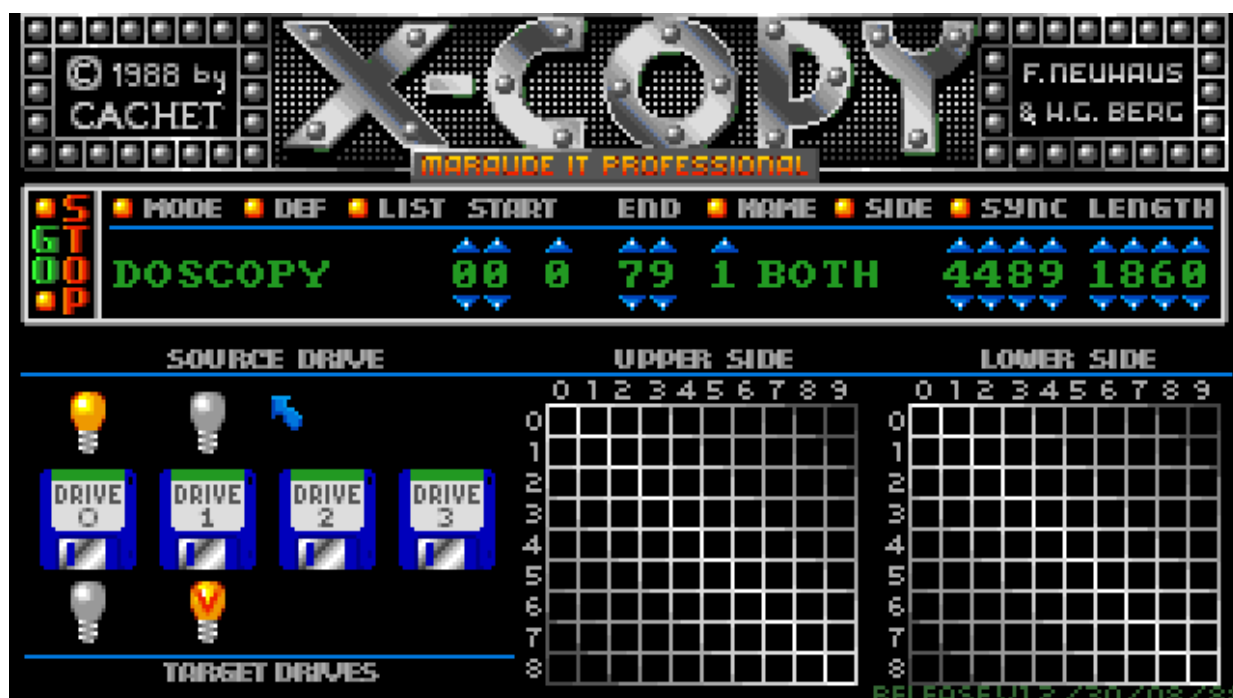
The argument that people like Ocean and Microprose will go under because of people like me is complete crap. I started with an Atari 800XL and all my games were copied then - Microprose ones included. And when I updated to the ST, I carried on copying. What I'm saying is that piracy obviously doesn't harm these companies as they would have gone under by now. I'm sure you won't agree and will rave on about 'what a bad lad I am', but that will stop piracy about as much as Ocean's Robocop III dongle!

A. Nonymous, No Fixed Abode



A. Nonymous - A. Pillock, more like! You're about as original as you are clever. You state that you've been copying games since you've owned an Atari. What are you after, a medal? The main reason the Atari 8-bits failed was because of the lack of software available for them - why? Because people copied it all the time. So now tell us that it doesn't damage the industry. By printing your letter we hope we've inflated your pathetic ego - and shown others what a parasite you are...

Can pay, won't pay (CU Amiga issue 27, May 1992)



2. Unprotected games

Another prediction put forward by gamers was that by injecting disks with copyright protection, the publishers were throwing down the gauntlet, inciting crackers to kick it into touch, and to spread the unprotected editions. Release the games free of obstacles and any challenge would be rendered null and void, causing the crackers to leave well alone... so waxed the theory.

What this approach doesn't take into consideration is that the protection isn't necessarily aimed at the pros, it's primarily there to deter the *casual* playground X-Copy swapper. To this end, the publishers succeeded.



Protect and be Damned (prize winner)

"I feel I must write to you on the subject of software protection as no one ever mentions it. I think it is generally best not to use it for the reasons given below:

1) It is NOT protecting the software in the long run. This is because if a disk is protected, crackers will almost certainly hack the protection out and spread the game worldwide. The protection will stop the average schoolboy from swapping the game in the playground, but will lead to far more copies being made and spread in the hacking circuit. You never see an unprotected game like Zany Golf on a hacker's BBS and although it will be copied locally, (between a group of friends, say) it will never be as much as a cracked game.

2) The protection normally means the owner of the original can't make a backup copy or transfer the game to a hard disk. This means that although you may have a hard drive, you can't actually make use of the thing in the way you would like to!

3) Protection often hinders the game. Speedball and Xenon 2, for example, won't load in on a machine fitted with Kickstart 1.3 even though the game would work fine if it was unprotected. Early versions of Populous refused to load in on nearly all computers! Novella protection is not very good either as it is most annoying having to search through a whole pile of books and can be hacked out anyway: thus the game enters the hack circuit.

4) Money spent on protecting games is nearly all wasted. Take Shadow of the Beast, for example. This has some of the most advanced protection schemes and yet was cracked and in the hacking circuit days after it was released. Although the protection means the game can't be copied, the cracked version will be copied hundreds of times and so the protection has probably led to more copies being made than there would be otherwise.

If there is going to be protection, I think the best type is the key-disk variety (as used in Powerdrome). This is such that you are allowed to back up a game and then asked to insert the original once the backup has loaded to make sure you haven't pirated the game. Although this protection suffers from the problems detailed in 1, at least the legitimate user is allowed to make a backup for safety.

I think it is a sad thing that software houses spend money on stopping unscrupulous people from stealing their work."

Roy Weekes Sheerness, Kent

"It is a sad thing indeed, but the difficulty of combating theft of this sort should not stop us trying to. It is unfortunate that most protection stops the taking of legitimate back-up copies but I really don't see that the

protection acts as an incentive to copy. The toerags that steal software will try to do it whether there is protection or not - give in to them and we might as well pack up our computers now."

Roy's not copyright protection's biggest fan (Amiga Format issue 6, January 1990)



Even so, make zero protection a company policy and the problem becomes as widespread as it would in the hands of the organised illegal networks. Millions of people with no coding skills whatsoever would all of a sudden become equally capable of eating into a developer's profits as the reverse engineering gurus!

Very often when games were re-released as budget titles, publishers would revise the code so as to discard the copyright protection, probably to save on any further outlay accorded to the third-party developers of the chosen mechanism. Qwak and License to Kill are two such examples.

In some cases, publishers would even distribute cracked copies of their games, having first eliminated the cracktro screens, as this would be less arduous than attempting to bypass their own anti-piracy checks. This was the case with

the Hit Squad edition of Ocean's Toki, which was built on the foundations of Quartex's release.



Pirates and Protection

"This piracy thing. Personally I think that anyone who makes a profit out of pinching some poor sod's hard work should be shot, or at least put away forever. These scumbags are destroying the industry and if they don't stop then we are going to be stuck with some very expensive doorstops.

On the other hand there are some good points to note. The pirates' distribution network is bigger, better and faster than the software houses' so why bother to fight them with these clever copy protection things that never work in the end anyway? I've seen loads of pirated games and I'm sure you have too, that work better than the original.

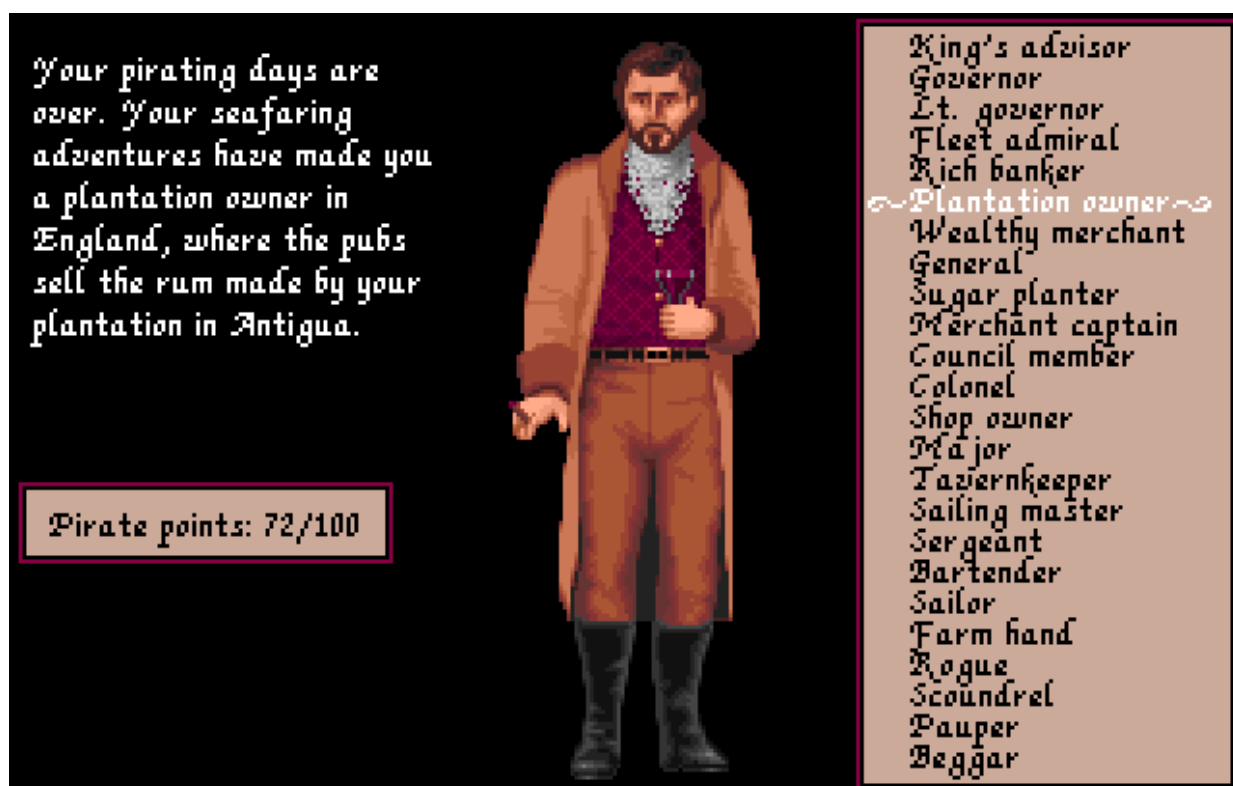
One to note is Xenon II. The original only worked on a few Amigas due to the copy protection and was on two disks, whereas the pirated version worked on all Amigas and was only on one disk.

I admit that they must have some protection on their disks, but what's wrong with the key disk technique? This worked very well as it allows you to make a backup copy for your own use, yet requires the original disk to work.

One to note on this is Deluxe Music Construction Set. I've seen copier programs that claim to copy this and even have parameters for it, but they never seem to work. Seems to be pretty good protection to me. Even better, why not use a counter technique as used on PCs. This allows you to make a certain number of copies then no more, unless you uninstall a copy. Both of these methods also allow you to copy the software onto a hard disk, something quite a few people would like.

Also, this manual protection, not a bad idea but it just doesn't work. If I see a game that uses this method then I just don't buy it. Pure and simple as that. There's nothing more annoying than having to find a word in a manual, especially if, like me, you're always losing them anyway. Besides, it takes a pirate about half an hour to cut this out as well."

Lorne Smith, Bexhill-on-sea, East Sussex



"We don't see "loads of pirated games" - we don't see any, because we want nothing to do with them or the pirates that produce them. Copy protection is never going to stop the determined pirate, though it does help restrict the casual copier. As I've said before in these pages, the difficulty of the problem doesn't mean we should give up. Pirates don't have a moral or legal argument to justify their actions, they are thieves, pure and simple."

Lorne drops himself in it (Amiga Format issue 8, March 1990)



3. Smart cards

A600 smart cards: an end to piracy?

The most innovative feature of the new Amiga 600 is its cartridge capability. A ROM slot has been built into Commodore's latest creation with the hope that third-

party companies will develop smart card software. The implications of this are an end to piracy and the possibility of huge games with no loading time. However, if the software industry doesn't support ROM cards, the A600 will become little more than a slightly shorter Amiga with a snappy case.

In time-honoured fashion, Commodore have largely chosen to just spring the A600 on the software industry. The American arm of the company were speaking directly to several companies (Renegade produced a smart card demo for Commodore Germany), but even the largest of software houses are unsure if they will be producing special games.

Although US Gold don't produce many games themselves, they told Amiga Format that their affiliates (particularly the Americans) are very interested in smart card software. Access, Cineplay, Lucasfilm and SSI are all keen to get some software out on ROM. These companies' games will lend themselves particularly well to being placed on smart card because they are large, colourful games which use every byte of the Amiga's memory. US Gold's official line is that they're looking into the possibilities, but are waiting to see how well the machine takes off.

This 'wait-and-see' attitude is being echoed at Domark, "We'll see how it sells", Storm "Seems like a good idea, but we've got nothing planned", Ocean "We'll see how much penetration the machine gets before committing ourselves" and Virgin "We will produce software for it, but we haven't got anything planned at the moment". There are however, some encouraging noises coming from software developers like Bullfrog; Peter Molyneux is very keen on creating smart card software, but is very

nonplussed by Commodore's attitude. He said, "We've been supporting the Amiga from the very beginning, so I find it frustrating when they don't let the developer know beforehand that a new machine is being launched".

Peter is keen on getting games like Populous 2 onto ROM because they are so hard pushed to fit extremely large games onto the Amiga. Electronic Art's Simon Jeffreys echoes Peter Molyneux's sentiments. He feels that the machine has taken a lot of people by surprise. He revealed that EA are looking into the possibility of smart card software, but he believes the responsibility for its success or failure lays squarely at the software companies' doors. He said, "If it gets the backing of the (software) publishers then it will be a whole new era for the computer industry".

Similarly, the CodeMasters are interested in the possibilities. Richard Eddy is confident that their software will start coming out on smart card because, he said, "We are used to cartridge technology already". Richard feels it is the games players who will be the ones to benefit from ROM-based games, because software could be so much more sophisticated.

It's not all fence-sitting though. Richard Barclay at Core (developers of such brilliant games as Heimdall and Thunderhawk) said they definitely aren't looking into it. He attacks the 'wait-and-see' attitude of the software industry and says they have no plans to create smart card games.

Largely then, the entire Amiga software industry is waiting for someone else to make the first move. Their ambivalence isn't been helped by Commodore's dubious launch methods. If Commodore had tried placing a few machines with developers beforehand, the

company could have had games all ready to show off, as it is, the ROM card slot on the A600 is likely to be used for little more than storing coinage.

To summarise, not on your nelly! (Amiga Format 35, June 1992)

With the advent of the Amiga 600's entry into the home computer market, the possibility for publishers to begin releasing games on smart cards or cartridges became a reality. This is because it was the first system in the Amiga line-up to be issued with a 16-bit Type II PCMCIA slot designed to interface with external peripherals such as hard drives, SRAM cards, network cards, video capture devices and so on.

The rationale was that by issuing games on arcane, read-only memory media, it would be impossible for people to duplicate them - they wouldn't have access to the advanced technology required to decrypt the data, or the blank media on which to reproduce it.

This one failed to leave the starting blocks for a number of reasons. Cartridge-based games could only be played on a computer with a compatible card slot, so this excluded the vast majority of the already established user base. Not at all ideal when mass distribution is imperative in order to recoup a developer's investment.

Plus, Kelly (Sumner, Commodore MD), why don't you tell us why none of the software in the A600 packs was distributed on smart cards?

"They're expensive. And when Fujitsu and Mitsubishi and all these guys get their acts together and realise that they're over-priced, we may well do something. The other thing is that the lead time on production of smart cards is

12 weeks - if there's a peak of sales, we can't turn them round quickly enough."

Amiga Format Special annual issue 2 (1993)



The increased development costs would surely have pushed up the retail price of the finished product. Would gamers be willing to absorb that kind of hit when they'd already got into the habit of paying half the price of the average SEGA Mega Drive or SNES game?

Had the PCMCIA slot become the defacto standard for launching software, it would permanently be engaged with the card-reading device, making it unavailable to other useful upgrade peripherals. Extinguish one of the A600's USPs, and it doesn't look quite so unique any more.

The inherently unassailable nature of the cartridge wasn't questioned at the time. This was certainly a bit

presumptuous given that devices were already available for all the popular cartridge-based systems that would allow you to dump the contents of a ROM onto floppy disks for backup - or purely piracy - purposes.

The copiers typically would cost much more than the games console itself, though it wouldn't have taken long to recoup your 'investment' when you consider that an average 16-bit console game would have set you back anywhere between forty and sixty pounds.

It would only have been a matter of time before some shrewd engineer or programmer invented a similar system to transfer the data from an Amiga smart card onto a more flexible medium. Of course, every Amiga already had a floppy drive built-in, and the computer would have been incommunicado with the PCMCIA slot by default, so half the hurdle had been vaulted from the outset.



4. Compact Discs

Releasing games on compact discs was a similar proposition, though this would later prove to be the industry standard mechanism for software distribution for several years to come.

CD recorder

White goods manufacturer Kenwood was showing a home, record-once CD machine. Though initially meant for audio and possibly hampered by the high cost of

disks, around \$90 a time, it offers exciting potential for anybody wanting to develop for the medium.

Ouch! (Amiga Format issue 20, March 1991)



At the time, the financial burden required to embrace home CD duplication was far beyond the reach of the vast majority of would-be pirates. In 1992, a typical CD recorder would demand an insurmountable \$10-12,000 investment! Even had that not been the case, the write-once media alone was so prohibitively expensive it made profiteering from the reproduction of commercial discs completely infeasible.

Economies of scale would have brought the power to control the distribution of their software within the grasp of the publisher, at least for the first few years of the CD's adoption, making it the ideal anti-piracy weapon.

The stumbling block of course was that in the early '90s very few Amiga users had a CD reader. When they eventually became available they were supremely expensive and only viable should you have one of the more upgrade-friendly

models. The CD32 redressed the balance, yet it was too little, too late. Commodore were on the brink of bankruptcy and many developers had already deserted the sinking ship.



5. Pay to play

This was undoubtedly the most ludicrous of all the piracy-thwarting manoeuvres proposed. The grand master plan was to have gamers pay a 'nominal' fee for a disk, and then phone a premium rate number to purchase unlock codes should they enjoy the game and wish to keep playing. At £1 a time it's easy to see how the costs could spiral well beyond that of the average game you would buy outright from a high street retailer. Your (or more likely your *parents'*) only salvation would be to pray you hit upon a game you really hated and the phone stayed firmly in its cradle!

Pay as you play system 'could kill piracy'

A strange new way of buying software is being suggested as the answer to piracy. Mail Order firm Arcanum will sell games at a very cut-down price - £5.99 for Killing Game Show, for example - and protect it with their own lock system. Every time a player wants a game, he will have to phone a special number to receive a code.

Clearly the company expects to make its money back on the phone calls: the metered call will cost an average of about £1 for the couple of minutes needed to get the

code. The benefits to the player, though, include the ability to try a game and pay no more if they don't like it, plus the chance to enter competitions, go to local games players meetings and build up points towards free games. Arcanum may also offer players the chance to buy outright games they particularly enjoy.

Suggestions that the system would be very cheap to games players but not so cheap to their parents or employers have been raised, the reception from the software industry is currently tentative and the public tends to distrust this kind of phone system. Still, it's an interesting idea.

Tell us what you think. Arcanum 061 876 0345.

Is there a psychiatrist in the house? Arcanum had clearly lost the plot. Amiga Format issue 20, March 1991.



Your ship is holed in a dozen places, and gradually sinks beneath the waves.

By now it should also go without saying that 101 crackers would have amputated the flimsy, hobbling protection system in a heartbeat. The upshot being that the end-user wouldn't have to pay any more than the cost of a floppy or two to acquire the game, or play the unadulterated edition until the cows come home. When 'home' would typically be a milking station on a battery farm, that *wouldn't* have been any time soon!

Swerving the thorny issue of modern 'freemium' games entirely, I'll move on...



6. Dongles

Ocean anti-piracy plan flops



The anti-piracy 'dongle' included with Ocean's game Robocop 3 and intended to prevent dongle-less pirate copies from being played has become a spectacular failure. A cracked version of the game which plays fine without the dongle was received by Amiga Format in the post only days after the game's release.

Comments by Ocean's Software Director Gary Bracey speaking to our sister magazine Amiga Power reveal the cost of the exercise. "We evaluated the whole dongle idea along with a number of other software houses, but nobody seemed very keen to put serious resources into it. So in the end we decided to put our money where our mouths were".

Ocean claim that the increased £35 price of Robocop 3 does not include the buyer paying for the dongle's development. "We've done our bit, done something

positive about piracy without passing the cost on to the consumer."

Copy protection is not necessarily aimed at the crackers so much as to discourage the casual copyist. "Though it was grating that you could download the entire game from bulletin boards within two weeks of the game going on sale, I think we can safely say that it won't be pirated by the man in the street" says Bracey. In which case you might not imagine that the cracking of the dongle would be such a disaster. So will they use the dongle idea again? "We know how they got past the Robocop one and we can make sure that they can't do exactly the same thing again, but the way I feel at the moment is that someone else can try it next time."

**Ocean's one-man anti-piracy army goes it alone.
Amiga Format issue 33, April 1992.**

I've covered in great depth the curious yarn of 'Robocop 3 in the Dongle Chronicles' elsewhere so won't rehash the saga here. To cut a long story short, amidst much overwrought bluster, the device was circumvented in record time and it was back to the drawing board for Ocean.



7. Pack-in freebies

Lure people in with collectable, novelty free gifts that aren't included with the scuzzy, hand-scrawled floppies Paddy normally supplies you with round the back of the Dog and Gun on a Friday night, and they'll choose to buy the genuine article instead. Even if incorporating these 'freebies' entails you paying a premium.

Shadow of the Beast is perhaps the most notorious example of such finagling in that the lusciously designed box included a t-shirt and poster featuring original artwork by the legendary Renaissance Man, Roger Dean. The only catch was that it cost £34.99, which possibly lead to the incidence of *more* piracy, not less because people weren't prepared to pay an extra tenner for the marketing gimmicks. These collectors packs show up on eBay once in a blue moon and command insane prices, precisely because there are so few of them available. That speaks volumes.

For other weird and wonderful examples, check out the 'Strange game extras and promo items' thread over on the EAB forum.



8. Self-sabotaging pirate copies

A few developers built tamper-triggered glitches into their games to foil the pirates. You may have *thought* you had a 1:1 copy of a game, that was until you reached a juncture where a critical task couldn't be performed because the program had been designed to fail at precisely that point.

The cracker would initially get the credit for being the first to release a working version, yet be left with egg on their faces when the embarrassing truth was revealed.

Ocean's Monkey-Island-wannabe, point 'n' click adventure, Hook, is the perfect example. One puzzle requires you to collect two beer tankards from the 'Crossed Swords' pub, and

You'd then visit the 'Jolliest Roger's Place' (yet another pub), and pay the barman in gold coins to fill up your three tankards with cocoa (beer wouldn't have been very kid-friendly in a Peter Pan game now would it).

What I can't fathom is why you need to pilfer mugs from pubs 1 and 2 in order to be served a drink in pub 3. Don't bars

tend to keep a supply of drinking vessels on hand, just on the slim off-chance that someone might stumble in out of the blue and ask for liquid refreshments who hasn't brought their own?

While he sleeps you whip off his pants to form part of the pirate disguise that will allow you to blend into your surroundings, board Captain Hook's ship, and ultimately defeat him armed with a ticking clock discovered on the beach using a metal detector (really just a magnet as you've been swindled by the tailor you purchase it from). All perfectly logical, coherent adventure game fare really.

How did this suddenly become a Hook walk-through guide? Oh yes, my point was that playing via Fairlight's cracked copy, it wasn't technically possible to acquire all three of the tankards (and fill them with 'cocoa' which has a frothy beer-head on top) so the game couldn't be completed.

The glitch was eventually patched by another group to create a 100% working crack, but in the meantime Ocean must have been laughing their socks off.

You could argue that it did absolutely nothing to curb piracy because any sales lost had already dented the developer's bottom line, long before the end-users realised they'd been duped.

Nevertheless, the wily rouse may have done wonders to cast doubt upon the quality of pirate copies in general. Potentially for *some* gamers this would be sufficient enough to make them toe the line in future. Given that there's a monumental 29-page thread recounting all the Amiga's 'bad cracks' over on the EAB forum, perhaps they would have been wise to do so.



Big anti-piracy strike

In a major anti-piracy strike, more than 3500 illegal Amiga disks were recovered from a raid at the notorious Barrowlands market in Glasgow. An ELSPA-appointed detective carried out the raid, backed up by three bodyguards and three police officers. The raid is all the more important because of the stranglehold pirates have had in Glasgow, a situation not helped by the ineffectiveness of the Scottish Law. Only Virgin are left as a games retailer in Glasgow as a result of the widespread pirating of disks in the area.

Scaremongering was all the rage in Amiga mags (CU Amiga issue 35, January 1993)

The battle to eradicate piracy, and avert the perennial necrosis of the much-maligned software industry rumbles on...